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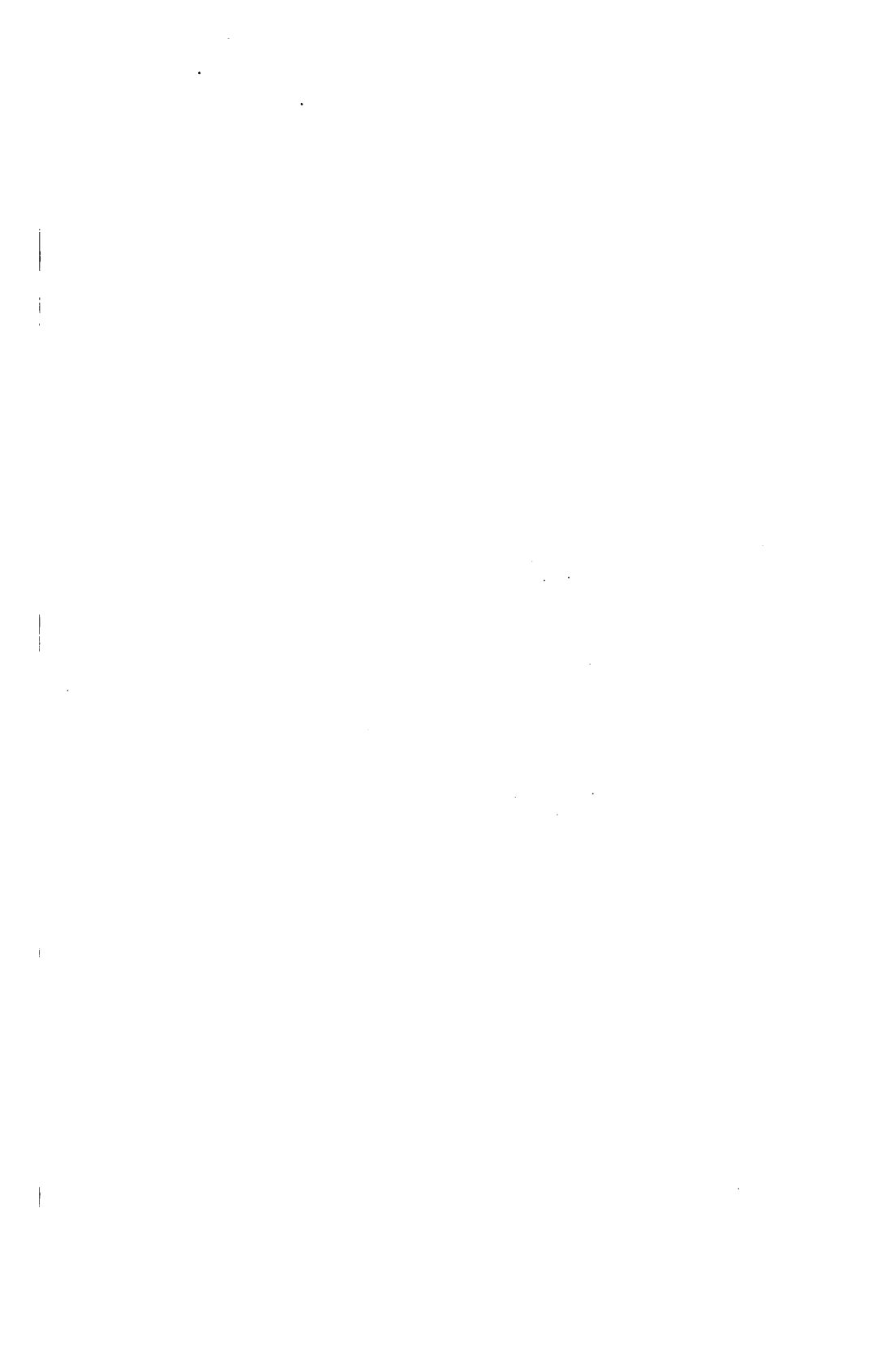
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THE

Q U E S T I O N ,
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WILL THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION BE RECOGNISED AS THE BASIS OF
THE SYSTEM OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION IN MASSACHUSETTS?

DISCUSSED IN FOUR LETTERS

TO

THE REV. DR. HUMPHREY,

PRESIDENT OF AMHERST COLLEGE.



B O S T O N :
PUBLISHED BY WHIPPLE AND DAMRELL,
No. 9 Cornhill.
1839.

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MAY 26 1944

LETTER I.

To the Rev. President Humphrey, of Amherst College.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have lately read, with much interest, the reports of your Board of Education and their intelligent Secretary, upon schools, school-books and school-houses. They are evidently taking hold of the subject in good earnest. We have also important documents upon the same topic, from Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, combining to show that a new and unusual interest has been excited over all the country; that great principles are about to be established; and that the department of popular instruction, so long neglected or abused, is about to be placed on an elevated, dignified and permanent basis.

A hasty examination of these documents has suggested to my mind a train of thought, which I beg to submit to your consideration. I am by no means alone in the views I entertain, and if they are false or erroneous, let them be corrected.

Massachusetts I have always regarded as taking the lead in this matter. Your schools have been sustained by the people directly, year by year, on the plan adopted by our wise ancestors; a plan of which I am yet to see *the first substantial improvement*. As the Puritan State, we look to you for high standards and comprehensive views; and in the discussion of the matter in hand, I shall therefore concern myself chiefly, *with the documents of your Board of Education*. The *principles* I shall examine, however, are of one and the same character all the world over.

If I correctly understand the new system in your state, it gives you a Board of Education, consisting of eight men appointed annually by the Legislature, besides the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, who are ex-officio members. To this Board, (which appoints its own Secretary,) are intrusted the superintendence and control of the whole machinery. Seminaries for teachers have been already endowed, and are soon to be opened, for the education of men and women to this important profession. A periodical publication is also contemplated, by which the views and measures of the Board are to be made known; and the Secretary is to traverse the State in all directions, holding county meetings, and, by all means in his power, awakening and sustaining public interest.

It is easy to perceive that such a Board will and ought to possess a commanding influence over your public schools.— Being created by the people, clothed with ample powers, composed of learned and influential men from various parts of the commonwealth, *with the supreme executive at its head*, and a popular, active, eloquent and devoted Secretary to carry out its measures, it would be passing strange should it fail to acquire a most powerful ascendancy in, at least, your primary institutions of learning.

If you have read the act, (the provisions of which are synoptically set forth in their report,) you observed, I presume, that the powers conferred upon the Board, *by the terms of it*, are but an inconsiderable part of what they actually possess. To make such a plan acceptable to the people, in these jealous times, it must *seem* to embrace very harmless duties; such as collecting and diffusing information, preparing reports and tables for the Legislature, and *recommending*, from time to time, such measures as are obviously calculated to improve or extend the system. This is all very well; but I need not tell you how far above and beyond all this, will be the *silent and unseen influence of this Board* on every subject affecting the interests of the schools. In the employment of teachers, the preparation and introduction of books, the adoption of new

principles of teaching, &c., their influence will be found to control all other influences.

Suppose, for example, the Secretary should be decidedly favourable to the *monitorial system* of instruction, which is now almost unknown in our country schools. From his minute personal knowledge of the state of the schools, he is satisfied that this is pre-eminently *the thing*, best adapted in every respect, to remedy existing evils and supply acknowledged deficiencies. He indoctrinates the Board. The whole subject is discussed. The preliminary measures are settled. The Secretary, in his addresses at county conventions, and in his correspondence with the leading men in the State, feels the public pulse, and gradually familiarizes the community with the necessity of some change and with the advantages of his favourite system. This is all within the letter of his commission. He is expressly required to "spread over the commonwealth," "information of the most approved and successful methods of arranging the studies and conducting the education of the young, to the end that all the children who depend upon the common schools for instruction, may have the best education which these schools can impart."

By and by the subject will be broached, very cautiously, in a report of the Board to the Legislature, and the great advantages of the monitorial scheme will be merely *suggested* or "*recommended*" for grave consideration. It will not be pushed for a session or two, nor, indeed, until its novelty shall cease to excite any alarm; but at last it will be distinctly proposed, complete in all its details, for legislative sanction; and who will venture to question the wisdom or policy of a measure which has been discussed, over and over again, in a Board constituted for this very purpose, with his Excellency the Governor at its head; a Board possessed of a full knowledge of all the facts and principles in the case, giving their time and thoughts to the subject, and aided by the experience and counsel of their Secretary, the only man in the commonwealth who has

nothing in the world to think of, or to do but to improve the schools?

I ask, who would question the measure? And if, perchance, some doubt of its expediency should be faintly expressed, who, that ever witnessed the proceedings of a Legislature, does not know, that the opposition must be very powerful, or the reasoning very cogent, to prevail against the influence of a board of control, constituted like your Board of Education? Depend upon it, the monitorial system, good or bad, would be introduced, and would become so completely interwoven with the whole course of public instruction, as not to be separated from it without a most violent and painful shock. So in regard to teachers, books, &c., it may be said, without exaggeration, that the power of such a Board must be little short of that which is ascribed to the monarch of ancient Babylon—" *Whom he would he set up, whom he would he put down.*" It will not, of course, be felt in edicts and formal enactments; but an invisible, all-controlling influence will issue from their council-chamber, that will reach the remotest district and the lowliest school-house in the commonwealth.

So far from complaining of all this, I regard it as the vital principle of the organization. The efficiency of it requires ample original powers. These I would not withhold; but I would be careful who were intrusted with them, and would watch the exercise of them with sleepless vigilance.

The examination of the documents to which I just now referred, has suggested to my mind this interesting question: *Will the Christian religion be recognized by your Board as the basis of the system of public instruction?*

It is to a brief discussion of this single topic, that I would invite attention.

LETTER II.

To the Rev. President Humphrey, of Amherst College.

My Dear Sir,—

Will the Christian Religion be recognised by the Board of Education in Massachusetts, as the basis of the System of Public Instruction ?

This is a plain, simple inquiry, and one which it may be thought impertinent to propose respecting our ancient and venerable commonwealth. Perhaps some may suppose that the Christian religion is now, and always has been, the basis of public instruction in the public schools, and that no Legislature or Board of Education would have the presumption to narrow, or weaken, much less to destroy it. They look back to the time when the school-master was set apart to his office with imposing religious ceremonies; and when the worship of God, the reverential reading of the Scriptures, and habitual reference to them as the only rule of faith and practice, were prominent parts of the daily order and discipline of the school. They are slow to believe that almost every vestige of these laudable usages has been swept away, by the march of "modern improvements;" and how hard will it be to convince them that great toil and difficulty must be encountered in the attempt to restore them!

It may be instructive to look for a moment at the present condition of what the Secretary of our Board calls "*this plastic institution, now moulding and fashioning the beings upon whom all the interests of society are so soon to devolve.*" It can be learned very accurately from the highest source. The first

annual report of the Secretary to the Board, dated January 1, 1838, contains the following remarkable passage:

“In regard to moral instruction, the condition of our public schools, presents a singular, and, to some extent at least, an alarming phenomenon. To prevent the school from being converted into an engine of religious proselytism; to debar successive teachers in the same school from successively inculcating hostile religious creeds, until the children in their simple-mindedness, shall be alienated, not only from creeds but from religion itself; the Statute of 1826 specially provided that ‘no school-book should be used in any of the public schools, calculated to favour any particular religious sect or tenet.’ The language of the revised Statute is slightly altered, but the sense remains the same. Probably no one would desire a repeal of this law, while the danger impends it was designed to repel. The consequence of the enactment, however, has been, that among the vast libraries of books expository of the doctrines of revealed religion, none have been found free from that advocacy of particular tenets or sects which includes them within the scope of legal prohibition; or at least no such books have been approved by committees and introduced into the schools. Independently, therefore, of the immeasurable importance of moral teaching; **THIS ENTIRE EXCLUSION OF RELIGIOUS TEACHING, THOUGH JUSTIFIABLE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES,** enhances and magnifies a thousand fold, the indispensableness of moral instruction and training. Entirely to discard the inculcation of the great doctrines of morality and natural theology, has a vehement tendency to drive mankind into opposite extremes; to make them devotees on one side or profligates on the other; each about equally regardless of the true constituents of human welfare. Against a tendency to these fatal extremes, the beautiful and sublime truths of ethics and natural religion have a poisoning power. Hence it will be learned with sorrow that of the multiplicity of books used in our schools, only three have this object in view; and these three are used only in six of the two thousand nine hundred and eighteen schools from which returns have been received.” pp. 61, 62.

There is no room here for doubt or misconstruction. It is plainly declared, in so many words, not only that the Christian religion has ceased to be the basis of public instruction, but that **RELIGIOUS TEACHING IS ENTIRELY EXCLUDED BY LAW**; and that this entire exclusion of religious teaching is, in the Secretary's opinion, "justifiable under the circumstances" of the case. And (what is worse than all) the justifying circumstances are, it would seem, unchangeable from the very nature of the case, as he apprehends it.

No two constructions can be put upon the language of the report. The syllogism might be stated thus:

No school-book shall be used in any of the public schools, says the Statute, calculated to favour any particular religious sect or tenet.

Every religious book is calculated (says the Secretary,) to favour some particular religious sect or tenet.

Therefore no religious book can be used in the public schools.

The Secretary stretches the language of the law (not a little perhaps) to exclude all religious *teaching*, as well as all religious *school books*; but the design of the law, as he expounds it, (viz. "to debar successive teachers in the same school from successively inculcating hostile religious creeds,") would necessarily embrace all modes and degrees of religious teaching; whether printed, written, or oral.

Now in the exigency which is occasioned by this "singular, and to some extent, at least, alarming phenomenon," the Secretary proposes to introduce "the sublime truths of ethics and natural religion," as a sort of "poising power between bigotry and profligacy," and he tells us with sorrow, that this poising power is found at the present moment in only *six* out of nearly three thousand schools! The law which "entirely excludes religious teaching," has been in force about twelve years. Boys and girls trained up in the schools, during that interval, are now from eighteen to thirty years of age; and the only poising power between bigotry and profligacy which is tole-

rated by law, has been introduced as yet, into only one of every five hundred schools!! Who would have believed that the Massachusetts schools had sunk so low?

But was not the Bible quietly exerting its influence all this time? Surely this would not be excluded as a book "calculated to favour any particular sect or tenet!" We have at hand a very full report on this point, from the Secretary of the Board, which shows that of *two hundred and ninety* schools making returns, *thirty-six* only use the Bible, *eighty-three* the New Testament, leaving *one hundred and seventy-one* who use neither. Of nearly *two-thirds* of your schools, it may be said that the Bible is not reported as among their books. I do not know how many good reasons may be assigned for this apparent neglect or disuse of this book; nor of how many explanations the statement is susceptible. I only affirm, what is easy of proof, that this document contains the report of books used in two hundred and ninety schools, and in one hundred and seventy-one of them the Bible has no place.

In this connexion I should like to have you examine another paragraph of the same report. I will transcribe it.

"Arithmetic, grammar, and the other rudiments, as they are called, comprise but a small part of the teaching in a school. The rudiments of feeling are taught, not less than the rudiments of thinking. The sentiments and passions get more lessons than the intellect. Though their open recitations may be less, their secret rehearsals are more. And even in training the intellect, much of its chance of arriving, in after life, at what we call sound judgment or common sense; much of its power of perceiving ideas as distinctly as though they were coloured diagrams, depends upon the tact and philosophic sagacity of the teacher. He has a far deeper duty to perform than to correct the erroneous results of intellectual processes. The error in the individual case is of little consequence. It is the false projecting power in the mind—the power which sends out the error, which is to be discovered and rectified. Otherwise the error will be repeated as often as opportunities recur. It is no

part of a teacher's vocation to spend day after day, in moving the hands on a dial plate backwards and forwards, in order to adjust them to the true time; but he is to adjust the machinery and the regulator, so that they may indicate the true time; so that they may be a standard and measure for other things, instead of needing other things as a standard and measure for them. Yet how can a teacher do this, if he be alike ignorant of the mechanism and of the propelling power of the machinery he superintends?"—pp. 58, 59.

Heré is a volume of truth in half a line—"THE FALSE PROJECTING POWER IN THE MIND." It seems, the great duty of the teacher is to discover and rectify this power, viz. "*the power that sends out the error.*" Can the Secretary mean error in intellectual processes merely? No; for he says, the rectification of these is quite a subordinate matter; and besides, he speaks of "feeling," "passion," "sentiments." These are rather emotions of the heart. Surely he must mean by this "false projecting power of the mind," what you and I should call a depraved heart; for the rectification of which we should look to the Spirit of God, accompanying the use of appointed means. Among these means we should place the diligent reading of the Holy Scriptures, and daily faithful instruction in the truths which they reveal. But alas! if the positions of the Secretary's report are well-grounded, we must dispense with all these, and betake ourselves to the beggarly elements of ethics and natural philosophy; and this, by the operation of law!

But I have a difficulty heré. Perhaps you can relieve me. The law, as cited in this very report, lays its weighty injunctions upon teachers in the following solemn and impressive language. "It shall be the duty of all instructors of youth, to exert their best endeavours to impress on the minds of children and youth committed to their care and instruction, the *principles of piety*," &c. It would appear then that the *principles of piety* are required by law, to be inculcated in schools from which *all religious teaching* is by law entirely excluded! You see my

difficulty. The problem is, so to construct a vessel, that it shall be full and empty at one and the same time.

I need not say to you, my dear sir, that your school system, though endowed with the wealth of the Indies, and administered by one wiser than Solomon, will not be worth a groat—no, not a single groat—if the views advanced in this report, as I understand them, are to prevail. I am by no means alone in the opinion, that any system of public instruction from which religious teaching is excluded, is and must be **RADICALLY DEFECTIVE**, let who will administer it, and though its resources may exceed, in guineas, the sands on the sea shore.

LETTER III.

To the Rev. President Humphrey, of Amherst College.

I closed my last letter by expressing confidently the opinion that any system of public instruction is and must be **RADICALLY DEFECTIVE**, if it excludes religious teaching; and I am not alone in this opinion.

The last report of the superintendent of public schools in Ohio, contains the following paragraph:

"It is the paramount work of the Common School to train up the rising generation in the *principles of the Bible*, and to teach them social and relative duties, with proper inducements to correct action. The affections should, in no case, be neglected. They are active, and on their proper cultivation depends more than on mere literary attainment."

From the supreme legislative authority of New York we have the sentiment, that "to cultivate the intellect only is to unhinge the mind—to *light up a recess only the better to show how dark it is*. If this is all that is done in popular education, then *nothing, literally nothing* is done, towards creating and establishing public virtue and forming a moral people."

His Excellency GOVERNOR EVERETT inquires, "What considerate man can enter a school and not reflect with awe that it is a seminary where immortal minds are training for eternity."

PROFESSOR STOWE, whose able report, I doubt not, you have seen and read, tells us that he has inquired "of teachers and men of every grade of religious faith; instructors in common schools, in high schools, and schools of art; of professors in

colleges, universities, and professional seminaries; in cities and in the country; in places where there was a uniformity, and in places where there was a diversity of creeds—of believers and unbelievers; of rationalists and enthusiasts; of Catholics and Protestants, and he never found but one reply; and that was that the BIBLE is in itself the best book that can be put into the hands of children, to interest, exercise and unfold their intellectual and moral powers.”

DR. JULIUS, of Hamburg, whose researches on this subject have been singularly faithful and comprehensive, expresses his settled conviction, that “every general school system ought to provide *specifically for the cultivation of religious feelings*,” and this truth, he says, “is acknowledged in those countries where public instruction has most prospered.”

A Member of the British House of Lords, publicly declared his opinion, a short time since, that “though much has been done within the last thirty or forty years to promote public Education, the absence of *Bible influence* has rendered the moral effect of it all of very doubtful value.”

And one of the most able of British periodicals lately remarked, “that there is no one characteristic of the present age more singular than its inclination to undervalue all moral education. This is certainly the reverse of what ought to be the case, inasmuch as the happiness of men depends far more upon the control of their internal feelings than their external circumstances; far more upon ‘a conscience void of offence’ than upon the highest intellectual acquirements.”

If it should be said, that these opinions are irrelevant because they have reference to *moral* and not *religious* teaching, it would be sufficient to reply, that the Bible, which is recognised by nearly all of them as the authoritative source of moral instruction, reveals no code of morals separate from religious sanctions.

In the introductory letter to “*Peers on Education*,” by Rev. DR. HAWKES, he speaks of the general education of the country as utterly defective unless *religious teaching* is recognised as a

constituent branch of it:—"We must teach religion," he says, "or abandon *the only efficient agent* in training the moral man."

In the body of the valuable work by Mr. Peers, we find the opinion expressed, that "the teacher should faithfully use, every day, in the school room, *all the variety of means* which the clergyman employs from the pulpit. He should use them in the same spirit, for the same purposes, and with the same supplicating dependence, on the divine aid and blessing."

And the late Dr. RUSH, of Pennsylvania, exposes our inconsistency—in that "we profess to be republicans, and yet neglect the only means of establishing and perpetuating our republican forms of government—that is, *the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity, by means of the Bible.*"

There can be no misconstruction of such language, nor any rational doubt of the soundness of such views. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.* This law, with its sanctions, must be the basis of every code of Christian morals; and hence the indispensable necessity of the Bible as a text book of moral and *religious instruction* in our common schools.*

There is, however, a system of morals, to which that suggested by the Secretary of your Board in his annual report, bears a striking resemblance. It was promulgated, a few years since, by one CARLILE, a man of unenviable notoriety in Great Britain. He had an office in Fleet street, London, which he called the "*Temple of Reason*," branches of which were (if they are not now) established in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. From the "*Temple of Reason*" he sent forth an address "to men of science," proposing "a new system of education better adapted to the happiness of the rising

* The American Lyceum, at its last Annual Meeting in Hartford, discussed this subject at full length, and unanimously adopted the sentiment here expressed.

generation than any hitherto extant." I will give you the outline of it in his own words.

"I would banish from our school-books every word about God, or devil, or heaven, or hell, as hypocritical and unmeaning words, mere words of sound, and would confine the attention of children and youth to such subjects as an every-day's experience shall evince to them to have a foundation *in nature*. Therefore I would say that the books of children had better be filled with scientific subjects than with moral precepts. I would most strenuously exhort the reader to abandon the idea, if he does hold it, that morality is dependent on religion." (Do we not find here the germ of the theory of the honourable secretary?—*a morality from which religion is entirely separated by law*.) "I solemnly and deliberately assert," continues this oracle of reason, "that religion is rather the bane than the nurse of morality. What avail the dogmas of the priest about an end of the world, about a resurrection, about a day of judgment, about a heaven or hell, or about rewards and punishments after this life. Away with the ridiculous idea and the priestly dogma of immortality—away with the contemptible notion that our bones, muscles, and flesh shall be gathered together after they are rotten and evaporated, for a resurrection to eternal life," &c.

Unphilosophical and repulsive as this scheme is, would not some of its features harmonise admirably with the Secretary's principle—that there is a code of morals independent of religious faith, and that "ethics and natural religion" will answer for a poising power between bigotry and profligacy! Some members of the Board would, I know, shrink with horror from the adoption of such sentiments, but I pray your judgment whether the *leading sentiment* of the report of the Secretary, (the influential and efficient organ of the Board,) would not necessarily bring us to this, if carried out to its legitimate results?

By the new scheme, the character of God is to be represented as it is exhibited in his beautiful creation. This, and this

only, they can understand. The light, the flowers, the songs of birds, the green fields, the fathomless ocean, "*things which have their foundation in nature,*" these furnish lessons enough for the tender age of childhood and youth, respecting the character of the Great Supreme. And when his character is thus presented, the human heart is formed and prepared by nature to love and admire it. If they seek to know any thing of his moral attributes; if they would inquire whether the moral governor of the universe, and the final judge of quick and dead, is *holy* and *just* as well as *wise* and *good*, let such presumptuous curiosity be rebuked and checked. Tell them that the holiness and justice of the divine being; his hatred of sin; the provisions of his grace in the atoning sacrifice of his son Jesus Christ; and the disclosure of his fearful purposes respecting the finally impenitent, are mysterious and abstruse subjects, the examination of which will only sour and alienate their minds, and perplex and confound rather than enlighten and guide their inquiries.

The picture I have just sketched is not one of mere fancy. If I am not altogether deceived, it has a perfect original in the minds of several of the most active friends of the new plans of education among us, and in two or three other States, and it will be drawn out in living characters, *within ten years*, unless some very prompt and vigorous measures are employed to prevent it.

The Colonial Legislature of Massachusetts regarded it "as the chief project of Satan" to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures; and to baffle him in this crafty scheme, they established common schools where all children might be taught to read and write, and it has been truly said that "all the provisions for popular education throughout the Union had their origin in the desire of the puritans to qualify their children to read the word of God."

Ah, my dear sir, these men, CARVER, BRADFORD, WINSLOW and their fellows, were sagacious men. Liberty of conscience was with them something more than a mere watchword for

Deists and infidels. That *religious teaching is entirely excluded by law* from the common schools of the Bay-State, would be a marvellous tale to tell in their ears. But to develop the substitute; to tell them how it is proposed to remedy the evil—to supply the breach, viz. “to introduce the beautiful and sublime truths of ethics and natural religion as a poising power between bigotry and profligacy;” who that ever read their story would undertake to describe the emotions that such a disclosure would excite in their bosoms!

Yours, &c.

LETTER IV.

dent Humphrey, of Amherst College.

My Dear Sir,—

I wish you to contemplate the subject I have presented to you in the preceding letters, in two points of view—

1st, As it respects the *fact*, and

2d, As it respects the *theory*.

1. As a *matter of fact*, the position assumed by the Secretary of your Board in his annual report, is, in my apprehension, utterly unauthorized and indefensible. “*The principles of piety*” are required by law to be impressed upon the minds of the pupils in our public schools. In the ordinary acceptation of the phrase, THESE PRINCIPLES CONSTITUTE THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. To fear, love and serve God, are among the principles of piety; and the motives and obligations to these exercises are inseparably connected with the exercises themselves. I contend that the law of 1826 does not reach and cannot be construed to reach, the *oral instructions* of the teacher, nor any kind of books except what are, strictly speaking, *school books*, by which I should understand the class-books and text-books. The teacher is left at full liberty to inculcate such views of religious truth and duty as may commend themselves to his own conscience in the sight of God; and not only so, but he is peremptorily required, *by law*, to do it, and that, too, with the strictest fidelity. The law, as cited by the Secretary, certainly prohibits the introduction of any *school books* into the public schools, that favour any particular religious sect or

tenet; but if its object is to shut the mouth of the teacher and seal up every fountain of religious knowledge, and this "to prevent the school from becoming an engine of religious proselytism by entirely excluding from it all religious teaching,"—the phraseology must be materially changed. So long as the teacher is at liberty to inculcate the principles of piety, as the law requires—the law may put what restrictions it pleases on *school books*, and hostile religious creeds may still be inculcated by successive teachers. I am amazed that the Secretary should show so little of his acknowledged *acumen* in the construction of the statute on this subject.

But even in regard to *school books*, is it clear that "religious teaching is to be entirely excluded from them?" This inference of the Secretary seems to me perfectly gratuitous. Pray what religious sect or tenet is favoured by "Watts' Divine and Moral Songs?" If none, by what authority are they excluded from the public schools? And yet I undertake to say that they would not be tolerated for a moment, if the Secretary and the Board shall agree to sustain this report. A plain farmer or mechanic would understand from the language of the Legislature, that the peculiarities by which the various denominations of Christians are distinguished from each other shall not be discussed or brought forward in our common school books *for the purposes of proselytism*, and what teacher of sound discretion would wish to have them introduced or discussed in his school in any form or for any purpose? The precaution is wise and necessary, and every teacher who is worthy of the vocation, would scorn to take advantage of his position to bias the minds of his pupils on these points.

But surely there is a wide difference between a school-book "calculated to favour some particular sect or tenet," and one which is destitute of any religious character whatever, or (virtually) an *irreligious book*. When, therefore, the Secretary tells us that "among the vast libraries of books expository of the doctrines of revealed religion, none are found free from such an advocacy of particular tenets or sects, as brings them

within the prohibition of the law;" he simply means that all these religious books treat of religion, (not very surprising,) and that any book which treats of religion or contains "religious teaching, is entirely excluded by law from the public schools." I cannot believe that the framers of the law ever contemplated such a monstrous construction of its provisions, nor that the people of Massachusetts will sanction it. Let the subject be fairly understood, and such views as the Secretary advances will be repudiated with indignation.

2. *As to the Theory.* I think you will agree with me, that nothing can be more irrational and unphilosophical than the opinions, which I have attempted to show are entertained by the Secretary of your Board of Education, and which, I have good reason to believe, are held by many of his counsellors and co-operators. Aside from the indispensable influence of revealed religion in forming moral character, and in giving force and sanction to moral precepts, we may wisely and confidently contend for it as *an essential part of intellectual education*. The natural tendency of religion, when properly understood and applied, (I use the language of another,) is to stimulate the mind to activity, by imparting a just conception of the value of thought, and by supplying subjects of meditation and sympathy, which expand and invigorate the understanding, whilst they purify and refine the heart. As it exalts the individual character of man by unfolding the true purpose and destiny of human nature, it adds to the utility of knowledge both as a source of delight and an auxiliary to moral principles, and wherever it operates with success, it will lead to those habits of reflection and foresight which ignorance necessarily weakens or entirely destroys. The truths of religion can never be justly apprehended or firmly believed without awakening and stimulating *the mind* and leading to habits of meditation, which exercise and strengthen the *understanding*. There is much in the very feelings which religion excites to arouse the torpid powers. Its principles are not only various and lofty, but they are urged with sanctions which overwhelm by their grandeur

and interest, and sink as it were every other subject into comparative meanness and obscurity. The character and government of the Infinite mind; the condition of man as fallen yet immortal; the exhibition of the world as a scene of trial, a theatre on which vast multitudes of intelligent beings are performing their respective parts, preparatory to an endless destiny; the mission of the Son of God in human form, as a messenger from heaven, to contend in open conflict with the powers of darkness; to reveal the mysteries of atonement and faith, and holiness; to heal the wounds of a guilty spirit; to pour into it the sweet balm of hope and consolation, and to foretell the glories of that future existence which gives to the present its deepest interest and its most lasting value; these are some of the topics which religion furnishes for reflection. And the mere naming of them awakens all the most sacred and noble feelings of the heart, and lifts the soul as it were to a brighter sphere, where it may freely expand its great powers in the light of divine truth, and wander delighted and invigorated without limit or restraint. *It cannot be doubted with candour that the influence of these topics will be eminently useful, and in spite of every obstacle, will give a real tone of dignity to the understanding, and of tenderness to the heart.**

These views are sound and philosophical. The candour and good sense of the community must heartily respond to them, and if such views must be sacrificed; if the narrow and trifling policy which the report before me seems to contemplate is to prevail—if, to make a system of public instruction generally acceptable, "religious teaching must be entirely excluded" from it—I doubt not, that the Board of Education, with all its appendages, will be set aside, *as matters of no consideration* in comparison with the recognition of the doctrines of revealed religion in our system of public education. The people are not prepared to substitute "ethics and natural religion" for the re-

* Review of "Foster on the Evils of Popular Ignorance," Lond. Ch. Obs. Vol. xix. pp. 741-2.

velation of the divine will, made in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Be assured, my dear Sir, that the project of Satan, which our venerable forefathers, in 1646, were so anxious to thwart, was a weak device compared with that which one of their descendants in 1838 is striving to defeat.

I now come to the main purpose of my letter, which is to urge upon the good people of our country, of all parties and denominations, and especially upon the clergy, (whose influence on this subject has been, in times past, so powerful and so salutary,) to unite their counsels and efforts to put down this new-fangled philosophy of education. The principle that the majority shall govern is not yet exploded. Where Universalists and Unitarians, or Deists and Infidels, are the majority, let them have the benefit of their numbers. It is their unalienable right, and I would be the last to abridge it. If the representations I have made to you in these letters are correct, (and an examination of the report will decide this point in its most important bearing, viz. *Whether the Christian religion will probably be recognised by your Board of Education, as the basis of the system of public instruction,*) it is clear that views most unsound and dangerous prevail, to some extent, among those who have the highest official influence in the department of public instruction. And, let me say, in this connexion, that the Board itself has given the weight of its influence to the views of their Secretary. The report is made *by him to them*, and they "*refer to it with great satisfaction, as a result of the new organization, in the highest degree creditable to its author, beneficial to the cause of education, and acceptable to the people of the commonwealth.*" We must receive it, therefore, *as the opinion of the Board*, as well as of the Secretary, that "religious teaching is entirely excluded by law from the public schools" of Massachusetts, and, of course, that the Christian religion—the religion revealed in the Holy Scriptures—will not, and in their view, *CANNOT*, be recognised as the basis of our system of public instruction; but instead of it, a system of "ethics and natural religion," such as enlightened the age of Socrates and Plato.

Now look at the prospect before us. The influence of this Board is increasing and extending every hour. The contemplated establishment of schools for teachers will fix it still more deeply and definitely. And when the scheme is settled and adjusted throughout our commonwealth, by successive acts of the legislature; and large funds are put at the disposal of its friends;—when a series of elementary books, prepared on the new principle, is completed, and generally adopted; and a library of “ethics and natural religion” fully introduced—in short, when the *Carlisle theory*, (for such it really is,) shall be reduced to successful operation in all your public schools, summer and winter, male and female, from the sacred shores of Plymouth to the rugged heights of Berkshire, who will feel like making an effort to uproot it? Will you not be satisfied *then*, with palliating, in some feeble degree, an enormous and destructive evil, which may *now* be entirely prevented?

THE PEOPLE—those that love our holy religion, and appreciate and venerate the institutions which have grown up under its influence, and especially the clergy, must gird themselves for a contest. The question must be discussed and decided as one of NATIONAL INTEREST. The training of future generations must not be given up to Universalists and Unitarians without a struggle. I am no bigot. I am no sectarian. I would give all men every where liberty of conscience; but I would still say, as Mr. Cousin, the celebrated friend and advocate of public instruction has said, “*the popular schools of a nation ought to be imbued with the religious spirit of that nation.*” Without going into the question of diversities of doctrine, is Christianity, or is it not, the religion of the people of this country? It cannot be denied that it is. I ask then with him, “is it an object to respect the religion of the people or to destroy it. If we mean to set about destroying it, then I allow we ought by no means to have it taught in the people’s schools. But if the object we propose to ourselves is totally different, we must teach our children that religion which civilized our fathers, that religion whose liberal spirit prepared and can alone sustain all the great institutions of

modern times." "Christianity ought to be the basis of the instruction of the people, we must not flinch from the open profession of this maxim, it is no less politic than it is honest." "Let our popular schools then be Christian; let them be so *entirely and earnestly*." "Primary instruction flourishes in three countries, Holland, Scotland, and Germany, and in all it is *profoundly religious*." I pray you to mark the language of the French philosopher and philanthropist, "IF YOU WOULD DESTROY THE RELIGION OF THE PEOPLE, KEEP IT OUT OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS."

I conclude these letters, by simply asking, whether the department of public instruction, in our ancient State, is in safe hands? If it is not, is there spirit enough among the progeny of the pilgrims to rescue it? The mere inquiry is enough to awaken vigilance, if not to alarm fears; and whatever of interest the subject possesses for the people of Massachusetts, it possesses (other things being equal) in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and indeed, every State and Territory within our bounds.

Yours, &c.